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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Fayetteville Technical Institute (FTI) to determine if there were any attitudinal differences between a group of students who participate in college governance and a matching sample of students who do not participate. The attitudinal variables focused on personal awareness (i.e., self-understanding), poetic awareness (i.e., appreciation for the arts) and political awareness (i.e., concern about the world and the welfare of humanity). Students classified as participants (n=12) or nonparticipants (n=12) in the FTI governance structure were administered the Awareness Scale from the College and University Scales Pace. The results showed that there was no significant difference in awareness between student participants in college governance and student nonparticipants, indicating that the programming suggestions of student participants in governing committees can be considered in line with the opinions of the student body as a whole; and that faculty members, administrators, and student groups who wish to know what "student opinion" is on a given issue should work through organized bodies of student representatives. (LAL)

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A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCES IN AWARENESS BETWEEN STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN COLLEGE GOVERNANCE AND STUDENTS WHO DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

What are the attitudinal differences in the sense of awareness between a group of students who participate in college governance and a matching sample of students who do not participate in college governance? Awareness is identified with items that express concern and emphasis upon three sets of meanings: personal, poetic, and political-self-understanding, appreciative relationship for the arts, and concern about the world and welfare of mankind, respectively. To test this hypothesis, twenty-four students were grouped as either participants (members of various committees) or nonparticipants in the college governance structure at Fayetteville Technical Institute, Fayetteville, North Carolina. Both groups were administered the Awareness Scale from the College and University Scales Pace. Results indicated that there is no significant difference in awareness between student participants in college governance and student nonparticipants. As a direct result of this study, the following recommendations were made:

(1) Members of the faculty and administration who seek to know what student opinion is, should first contact a student representative on a standing committee.

(2) Office of Student Development should further explore how truly representative of student opinion and attitudes the student members on the committee are, or are not.

(3) Study student participation in other areas of campus environment.

(4) Administer this research study, or a similar one, on a yearly basis.

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INTRODUCTION

It would most certainly seem that the day of radically oriented students, demanding political reform on the college campus, has gone by the wayside. There may be several assumptions for this. Since the early 70's, educational theorists have expressed the need for student participation in college governance. Today, in the decade of the 80's, we witness student participation in virtually every aspect of college governance.

The governance structure of the community college bears a surface resemblance to that of other educational institutions. The board of trustees are like those in the public school system, and its relations with legislative bodies and higher education agencies are like those of the state universities. Community colleges have done more than simply borrow certain characteristics from other members of the school family; they are modifying them to form a governance structure of their own that will enable them to perform their mission in society (Zoglin, 1976).

A student's social class origin has a decisive bearing on the extent and quality of his or her college education, and the type of higher education in turn critically affects the quality of the student's first job (Useem, 1974).

The studies of Karabel (1972) not only describe the basic patterns in community college social class teaching, but also analyze the political forces behind the adoption of

vocational programs. The development of vocational training can be traced both to a business outlook widespread among community college administrators and to overt pressures from the "top."

The study by Livix (1971) was to determine student attitudes concerning participating in collegiate activities, policy making, and institutional planning and governance. In his study he found that students are willing to experiment, make selections, and are concerned with the actions of others who feel student participation is important. The findings of Fallon (1971) brought some interesting findings to light. He first concluded that students were interested in the topic of student participation in college governance since seventy percent of the total students studied returned the questionnaire. In addition, the students expressed interest in participation in decision-making in a number of areas including: commencement procedures, evaluation of faculty, grading system, and community relations.

An analysis of the outcomes of campus protests suggests that campus unrest had widespread and often profound effects on the programs and governance of many institutions. Many of these changes are now institutionalized. During the peak period of protest activity (1966-1971), a majority of the institutions across the country implemented significant changes in their programs and policies. With regards to college governance, it is now standard procedure on many campuses to have student representatives on key

committees and, in a few instances, on boards of trustees. When students are not represented or are non-voting members, their advice is often sought as a routine matter. Censorship of campus publications is either minimal or non-existant. The student judicial process is controlled primarily or exclusively by the students on many campuses (Astin, Bayer and Bisconii, 1975).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For the purpose of this practicum, the research question that was examined was as follows: Do the students who participate in college governance score significantly higher in the attitudinal sense of awareness (as measured by the College and University Environment Scale) than do students who do not participate in college governance?

HYPOTHESIS

In order to properly examine the research problem, a hypothesis was formulated. The hypothesis for this problem was: Students who participate in college governance score significantly higher in the attitudinal sense of awareness (as measured by the College and University Environment Scale) than do students who do not participate in college governance.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of this study, in particular, is to determine if the attitudinal perceptions of this organization

is or is not significantly different from those attitudinal perceptions of a matched sample of students not involved in college governance.

In the following, some thoughts and opinions are examined. Is student involvement a good thing? Should it be stifled or encouraged? Should students participate in any form of college governance? If there should be student participation, to what degree should it be allowed and/or encouraged? All of the material referred to is of tremendous importance when considering the validity of student involvement and/or participation in college governance. It would certainly seem that at Fayetteville Technical Institute the administrative staff must consider the validity of the student committee as an indicator of student opinions on the whole.

In a study conducted by the Office of Youth and Student Affairs (1973), entitled "On the Nature and Scope of Student Participation on Boards of Trustees", some interesting findings were discovered. A positive attitude in student involvement in college governance has been established for the following reasons. First, it is an institutional response to student activism. It is, at the same time, a means of profiting from new perspective and competence. The last two reasons stated were that students will gain both psychologically and educationally from these experiences.

In exploring the formal and informal role of student government in college organization and how that role differs

in small community colleges, two different models for student government operations were reviewed: a power-driven organization that describes the status quo and a purpose-driven organization that illustrates options available to college administrators. The power-driven organization is a pyramid with the governing board at the top holding ultimate authority and dispensing power downwards. In such a system, the student government rests at the bottom and has virtually no responsibility. With such limited authority, student governments tend to invent functions as entrees to power. Natural student frustrations are magnified so that self-interest and informal veto powers are called into every judgement. The purpose-driven organizational model directly opposes the power-driven model in that it relates to organizatioal dynamics rather than to structure. In such an organization, student government exists as a partner with other governing units working toward the institutional purpose, has definite authority and partnership responsibilities, shares in administrative planning, and directs student opinions on campus. Fayetteville Technical Institute favors the purpose-driven organizational model.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Awareness - Identified by Pace (1963), is identified with items which express a concern and emphasis upon three sets of meaning: personal, poetic, and political.

College governance - Any organized system of governance whereby there is some form of shared responsibility in decision-making, policy-making, or at least input.

CUES - College and University Environment Scales. Developed by Robert Pace in 1963. It is designed to measure attitudinal perceptions of college environment in various areas.

Dependent variable - Attitudinal perception relative to awareness as measured in this study.

Independent variables - Individualistic values, sensitivity to the college environment, number of years as a participant in college governance, attitudinal differences in what college governance is and/or should be, and motivation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

(1) This study is limited to a comparison of only two groups of students: one group of twelve students which had participated in college governance versus the second group of twelve students which did not participate in college governance.

(2) Implications gained through information attained from this study may only have value to the staff at Fayetteville Technical Institute.

(3) The intervening variables and basic assumptions have certainly influenced the accuracy and validity of the study.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

(1) The two groups of students, one group of students which had participated in college governance and the second group of students which did not participate in college governance, studied are reasonably homogeneous.

(2) It was assumed that those student participants in college governance were interested and somewhat committed to a personal and social philosophy which influenced their desire to participate in college governance.

(3) It was assumed that those students who did not participate in college governance may have had a personal and social philosophy different from those who did participate.

(4) It is also assumed that the students studied accurately reported their responses to the questions asked on the survey.

(5) It was assumed that the students participating in this study had ample experience in the community college environment to warrant their responses on the survey.

PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA

For this study, a classroom experiment strategy was used to facilitate the evaluation of the effectiveness of the attitudinal sense of awareness (as measured by the College and University Scale) as it would occur in an actual college setting. The experiment was conducted in the

Department of Business and Economics at Fayetteville Technical Institute, a two-year community college located in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

This study utilized two groups of students -- one group consisted of twelve participants who have served on standing committees for this institution and had been involved in college governance. Students had been involved in the college decision-making process through participation as members of the Student Advisory Council on the following standing committees of Fayetteville Technical Institute: Student Activities, Learning Resources Center, Building and Grounds, Safety, Financial Aid and Scholarship, and Student Appeals Committee. Two students served on each of the above committees for the academic year which provided adequate student feedback and input into the vital phases of total campus life. The second group of students used in this study was a matched group of non-participants in college governance. All of the students participating in this study were students at Fayetteville Technical Institute.

During the month of September 1982, twenty-four students were administered the College and University Scales (CUES II) to help describe the atmosphere of the institution. The CUES II is not a test in which there are right or wrong answers; it is more like an opinion poll -- a way to find out how much agreement or disagreement there is about the characteristics of a campus environment. After categorizing these participants, a matched group of non-participants was selected based on year, sex, and curriculum.

PROCEDURES FOR TREATING DATA

Once the data had been assembled and differences in scores were noted, the scores were then submitted to a t test to determine the significance between the means of the samples. The null hypothesis tested was: There is no significant difference in attitudinal sense of awareness (as measured by the College and University Scale) between those students which did participate in college governance, and a matched sample of students which did not participate in college governance. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance, utilizing the degrees of freedom, which were 22, H_0: E = C. The alternative hypothesis is H_a: E ≠ C.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The random sampling technique that was used in the investigation included a total of twenty-four students that were studied.

The control group was found to have a mean score of 7.8 and a standard deviation of 3.39. The experimental group was found to have a mean score of 7.85 and a standard deviation of 3.24. This showed a mean score difference of .05.

An analysis of the data was then performed to determine if this difference was significant. An independent two-tail test for testing the significance of the difference

between two independent sample means was used for the analysis. The desired level of significance was established at .05. The degrees of freedom were calculated. Since the experimental group contained twelve scores, and the control group also contained twelve scores, the degrees of freedom were calculated to be twenty-two. Next, the critical t value was established. By referring to a table of critical t values, it was found that for twenty-two degrees of freedom, the critical t value at the .05 level of significance was 2.074 for a two-tail test. The standard procedure for t-testing was then employed. When the calculations were completed, the calculated t value was found to be .0424. Since the calculated value of t did not exceed the critical value of t, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in attitudinal sense of awareness (as measured by the College and University Scale) between those students which did participate in college governance and a matched sample of students which did not participate in college governance failed to be rejected.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of the data obtained from this investigation failed to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that students who participate in college governance will not necessarily score significantly higher in the attitudinal sense of awareness (as measured by the College and University

Environment Scale) than students who did not participate in college governance.

As a direct result of this study, the following implications were made. All implications as stated below are restricted in as far as attitudinal differences in the sense of awareness as defined for this study.

(1) Those offices involved in student programming can be relatively sure that when suggestions are made by the student committee members, they are in line with those opinions of the student body.

(2) Those members of the faculty and administration who seek to know what student opinion is, should first contact the elected representatives of the student body.

(3) Students, or groups of students wishing to know student opinions, or before referring to "what student opinion is" should work through the organized body of student representatives to realistically appraise student attitude.

(4) If there is no significant difference in this study reflecting sense of awareness, perhaps then no significant difference exists in other areas reflecting student perception. Perhaps the Office of Student Development should consider further studies relating possible differences between the students involved in college governance and students who are not. It does seem important that the Office of Student Development should know how truly representative of student opinion and attitude the student members on the committee are, or are not.

The role of student government, then, is to serve as an active, participating element of the institutional team representing the student population in the planning, resource allocation, organization, implementation, and evaluation of objectives directly related to their efforts to meet institutional goals and missions. By this inclusion in the implementation and operation of the institution by a purpose-centered organization, a more complete unity of institutional mission may be achieved. This mission of "total education" may in reality be operationalized.

It would certainly seem important for the Student Development Office of Fayetteville Technical Institute to consider further studies in this same area. It would seem important to determine if significant differences within these same selected groups exist in other areas of campus environment.

One, or several of the other scales as identified by CUES, might very well be used. Considerations should also be given to administering this same research study again next year. Perhaps significant differences would exist when investigating this same topic, with more of an emphasis on the length of time a student has been involved in campus government. The aforementioned suggestions for further studies are only a few ideas of other areas which would certainly warrant investigation.

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